

Member Development Panel

Notes of the informal meeting of the Member Development Panel held at the Civic Centre, Harrow on 6 November 2008.

Present:

Councillor Jean Lammiman

Councillor Paul Osborn

1. Quorum/Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Phillip O'Dell. It was noted that the quorum for the meeting was 3 Members, and that the meeting was therefore inquorate.

It was agreed to hold an informal discussion of the business on the agenda.

2. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED

To note that there were no declarations of interests made by Members in relation to the business transacted at this meeting.

3. Arrangement of Agenda

RESOLVED

That all items be considered with the press and public present.

4. Minutes

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 September be taken as read and signed as a correct record.

5. Public Questions, Petitions and Deputations

RESOLVED

To note that no public questions were put, or petitions or deputations received at this meeting under the provisions of Committee Procedure Rules 19, 16 and 17 respectively.

6. INFORMATION REPORT – Member Development Programme Update

The Panel received a report of the Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development, which reviewed the progress of the 2008 Member Development Programme and set out plans for the implementation of a full programme for 2008/2009.

Planning for the IDeA / London Councils Charter

The Learning & Development Service Manager reported that, based upon the self-assessment template discussed at the previous meeting, he had compiled an action plan that set out the activities, tasks and provisional milestones required in order to achieve charter recognition.

Coaching

The Learning & Development Service Manager reported that, following a meeting held with Roffey Park on 10 September 2008, two coaches had agreed to provide elected Members with a briefing on coaching opportunities. He confirmed that the briefings had since been held at the group meetings on 27 October. Councillor Osborn commented that the briefings had been well received and that most concerns had been addressed. The Chairman observed that, though the briefings had been useful, few Members had signed up for coaching. Councillor Osborn stated that he would speak to individual Members and encourage them to utilise the scheme. The Chairman added that she hoped Councillor Stephenson would also promote the programme amongst Labour Members and stressed the importance of finalising nominations as soon as possible. The Learning and Development Service Manager stated that he would aim to confirm nominations by 14 November.

The Chairman raised concern that Members utilising the Coaching scheme might not make use of the training programme offered by Roffey Park. Councillor Osborn stated that the Member Development team needed to make a distinction between the two development opportunities to ensure that Members understood the benefits of both.

Review of Member Development Activities since last meeting

The Learning & Development Service Manager detailed training that had been run since the Panel's last meeting. Councillor Osborn stated that it was not clear how many Councillors had undertaken the mandatory 'Disability Equality Duty' training and requested that he be provided with a full breakdown. The Divisional Director of HR & Development agreed to provide the information as soon as possible. The Chairman suggested that other mandatory training also be monitored.

The Learning & Development Service Manager informed the Panel that the 'Gambling Act' training had been rescheduled as the original date had coincided with Diwali. In addition, he reported that the 'Planning' training, originally scheduled for 6 November and 17 February 2009, would now only be held in February. The November session had been cancelled as the external trainer could not attend. The Chairman expressed her disappointment with the cancellations and stated that communication channels needed to be improved. She also suggested that reserve trainers be made available whenever possible. Councillor Osborn added that all religious holidays needed to be clearly labeled on the Council's calendar.

During a discussion regarding the 'HR Appeals Panel' workshop held on 13 October, the Chairman asked whether any further training was to be offered. The Divisional Director of HR and Development explained that there would be further training but, due to forthcoming changes in legislation, it would not take place until the next financial year. Councillor Osborn stated that it was often difficult for Members to participate in Appeal Panels as hearings took place during the day. He suggested that it may be necessary to alter the membership pool to ensure that panels could be established quickly. The Divisional Director of HR and Development agreed to speak to Democratic Services regarding the matter.

The Learning and Development Service Manager reported that two external councillors had attended the 'Dealing with Casework Effectively' training held on 21 October. He stated that some training, including the upcoming 'Time Management' workshop, was currently being offered out to other London boroughs on a trial basis. The Chairman commented that it was useful to have an external perspective and that it may be good for Harrow Council to seek external training opportunities. The Divisional Director of HR and Development stated that the Member Development team was interested in networking and, provided the quality was high, the use of external training would be explored.

Planned Activity for Next Quarter

The Chairman stated that she was disappointed with the number of Councillors that attended the e-learning event on 3 November. Councillor Osborn commented that he had tried the e-learning software himself and, whilst he felt the presentation was good, he had not been impressed with the content. The Learning and Development Service Manager reported that, following a trial, some Members had stated that the software would be of more use to new councillors.

Councillor Osborn stated that he would look at the software again to see whether it had been developed further. He suggested that the e-learning software could be used in conjunction with coaching and other training, acting as an additional resource rather than a standalone service. The Chairman supported the idea and suggested that the Roffey Park interviews be held in the Members' Library so that the e-learning software would be easily accessible. The Divisional Director of HR and Development agreed to proceed on this basis.

The Learning and Development Service Manager informed the Panel that the next Action Learning Event would be entitled "Customer Satisfaction – Meeting the Challenges Ahead" and would be held in the Council Chamber.

7. INFORMATION REPORT – Member Development Charter Draft Action Plan

The Panel received a report of the Divisional Director of Human Resources and Development, which set out a draft action plan for achievement of the IDeA Member Development Charter.

The Learning & Development Service Manager introduced the document and informed the Panel that the Member Development team hoped to invite Chris Hibard of Capital Ambition to visit the Council and speak to Members. He explained that the Council would be assessed in June 2009 and, as a key assessor, Chris would be able to determine the Council's current position and suggest areas that needed additional work. Following a discussion, it was agreed with the Learning & Development Service Manager that the visit should be arranged in conjunction with the next meeting.

The Chairman asked whether it would be possible for the Member Development Team to create a document that detailed the timescales the Council would have to adhere to in order to fulfill the action plan and achieve charter recognition. She stated that it was important that a working document was available to ensure deadlines were met. The Learning & Development Service Manager agreed to undertake the task.

8. Any Other Urgent Business

Revised Evaluation Form

The Learning & Development Service Manager reminded the Panel of the revised Learning Evaluation Form that was in development. He stated that there were plans to pilot a follow-up evaluation system whereby Members would be contacted three months after their training to see whether and how it had benefited them. The Chairman raised the concern that continuous follow-ups may irritate Councillors and recommended that a more standard form of feedback be adopted.

Training Needs Analysis Form

The Learning & Development Service Manager informed the Panel that he aimed to have a draft Training Needs Analysis (TNA) form ready by 31 January 2009.

(Note: The discussion having commenced at 7.45 pm, closed at 9.16 pm)